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U.S. Intelligence Operations Being Downgraded

Veterans of the very highest levels of Central Intelligence Agency operations, though not speaking for the record, are considerably alarmed about the elimination of some 800 agency positions under a personnel reduction plan largely instigated by Director Adm. Stansfield Turner. Some insiders—though by no means all—maintain that the cuts will seriously impair the CIA's once-elite clandestine service.

The scheduled personnel cut represents about 25 per cent of those primarily concerned with the espionage and counterespionage facets of intelligence operations, the so-called "cloak-and-dagger" area. Most of the firings and forced retirements will involve officers and other top personnel rather than clerical and technical support.

The cutbacks will deeply wound the top ranks of the Clandestine Operations Division, with a number of station chiefs throughout the world being axed. Many of those to be severed are among the most seasoned and knowledgeable in the agency; their loss represents thousands of years of hard-gained intelligence savvy.

Former CIA Director George Bush told HUMAN EVENTS: "I've not discussed this cutback with anyone in the Central Intelligence Agency, and can't pass judgment on this specific cutback. But as a matter of principle we should do nothing to further weaken our ability to collect human intelligence abroad. There are very real limits on what science and technology can provide in the way of information. Human intelligence remains absolutely essential to the survival of the free world."

Syndicated columnist Col. Robert D. Heintz (USMC-Ret.) explained that the decision to slash what some may regard as "the old-fashioned if not outmoded human functions of the intelligence game is based, according to supporters of the plan, on enormous increases during the past decade in what can be learned through satellite and electronic means, sources a clandestine-services veteran dismissed as 'gadgets.'"

Those who back Turner's position maintain that today 80 per cent of this nation's secret intelligence gathering is obtained through electronic rather than human agents. Administration sources also contend that most of the operatives who will be "cut" are Asian specialists, who had no function to fulfill after the fall of Indochina.

The cutbacks are thought to be the brainchild of Turner, his special assistant, Robert D. Williams, Vice President Mondale and David Aaron, the White House deputy assistant for National Security Affairs who is

morale was at the lowest point since the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. One source Heintz spoke with, vehemently opposed to the cutbacks, said "there's no gadget that can look inside Brezhnev's head or find out any of the human factors that provide vital shading to the raw facts we get from the satellites."

One very highly placed former CIA operative told HUMAN EVENTS: "Notwithstanding my own CIA perspective, which was technically oriented, I must point out that Turner is anti-human resource. He is technically oriented to the point where he wouldn't know a heavy piece of intelligence if it hit him in the shoulder. He has neither the flexibility nor imagination to oversee an intelligence operation that must, by its very basic nature, rely heavily on human contacts and human input."

Another, paratroop-trained former CIA operative (who worked in Asia and Latin America) responded: "You can't run an intelligence operation on just computers. You need to develop personal touch, personal sources of information. That's what this cutback doesn't take into account. And most of the personnel tightening measures that seemed reasonable were made in previous years. It doesn't make sense, and it doesn't say much for Turner's understanding of the operation he oversees."

A current CIAer told us: "When George Bush came in, we thought we were getting an on-the-make politician. After six months, he proved us wrong. Now we see Turner clearly doing what we expected of Bush—playing politics. He wants eventually to head the Joint Chiefs, and that means hopping in bed with the Carter people."

At the bottom of the severe personal-infiltration intelligence cutbacks, most agree, is the inward-turn mentality of highly placed liberals within the government.

In the words of one intelligence official, the Carter Administration's responsible parties are "so afraid to get their hands caught in the cookie jar of international rough play that they are petrified when it comes to personal operations. To them, a CIA-RDP99-00498R000100120040-7 ing of

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